

CPEC

Review of a Proposal for a new Community College Center in Orange County

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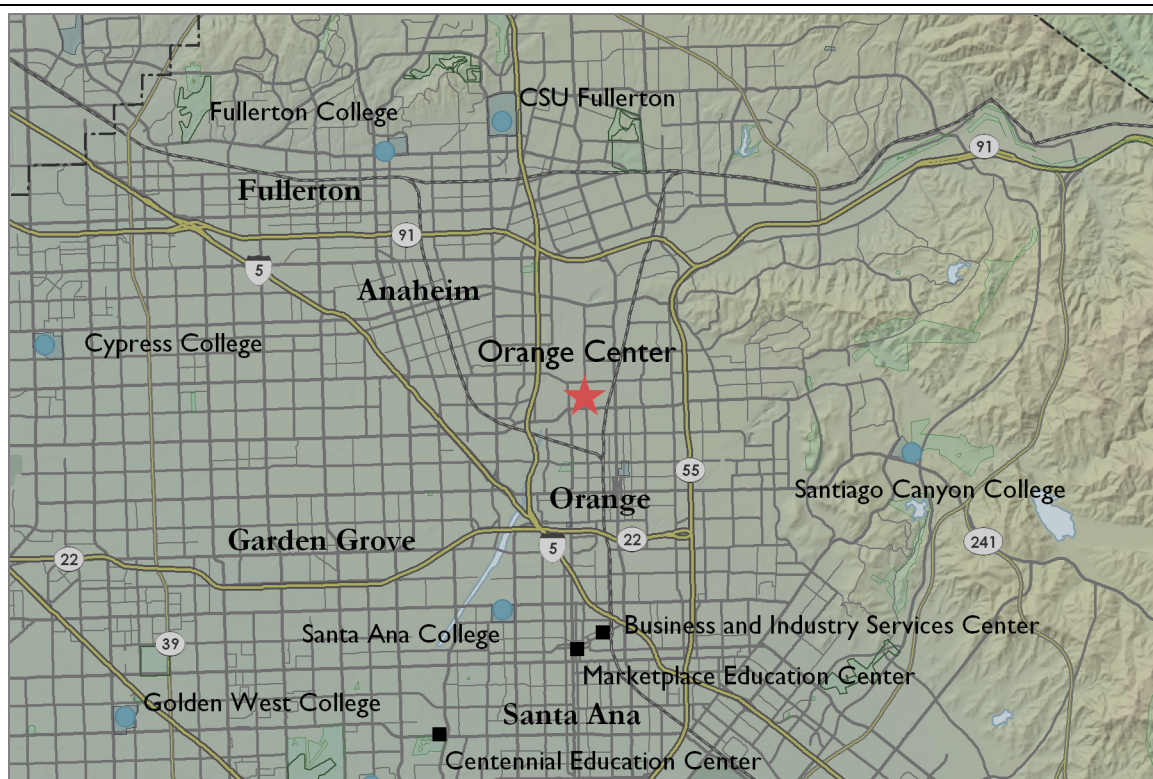
by Jessika Jones

This report reviews the proposal by the Rancho Santiago Community College District to convert its facility in Orange to a state-approved educational center. Educational centers are a cost-effective means for meeting increased student demand and of serving a region's educational needs because they often involve collaboration and shared facility use with high schools, university campuses, and local businesses. Educational centers can grow as needed when students require more course offerings; they begin small and expand as the region's population expands. Attending an educational center is a cost-effective option for students who can attend classes near their homes, cutting back on their commute time and expenses.

At its March 9 meeting, the Commission approved the staff recommendation to convert the Orange facility to an educational center.

CPEC guidelines require that an off-campus educational facility must serve at least 500 full-time-equivalent students annually before it can begin the process of proposing a conversion to a state-approved educational center. If the Commission votes to concur with a proposal, the center becomes eligible to compete for state capital outlay funding.

Location of Orange Center



Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Commission concur with the Board of Governors' November 3, 2009, decision to convert the off-campus Orange facility into a state-approved educational center. The recommendation is based on review of the proposal, a visit to the facility, and review of supplemental materials submitted by Santiago Canyon College administrative staff. From its first year of operation, the center has enrolled well over the minimum required full-time-equivalent students (FTES) needed to qualify for state-approved educational center status. The Orange facility offers non-credit programs and continuing education to thousands of local residents; creates greater opportunity for students and enriches the community as a whole.

Background

The Rancho Santiago Community College District, established in 1971, has two campuses, Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College. Santiago Canyon College manages the Orange Education Center. The center started in a leased facility in 1973 as the Orange Adult Learning Center, as a means to address the needs of an increasing adult population that required basic skills and English-language instruction. Demand for classes soon outgrew capacity, and the district determined that a new facility was needed.

In 2002, voters approved a \$337 million bond for district-wide improvement and expansion of Rancho Santiago Community College District facilities. Santiago Canyon College used a portion of its half of those funds to establish a new off-campus facility in Orange. The college acquired and renovated a 92,000 square foot former electronics plant to give 58,180 assignable square feet of teaching space. The Orange Education Center opened in January 2005, and enrolled just over 1,000 FTES in its first year. Enrollment continues to grow. The center provides low-cost and no-cost, non-credit, adult basic skills courses.

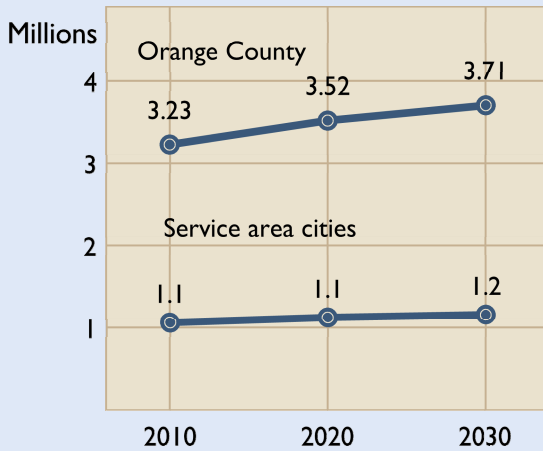
General Description and Overview

The Orange Education Center is in an industrial area two miles north of downtown Orange and one mile east of the State Route 57 freeway. It is housed in a refurbished warehouse with 58,180 assignable square footage. The center has a 300-space parking lot. It is accessible by three bus routes, major roads, and five freeways.

The center has two entrances on opposite sides of a central corridor. The building contains a registration counter, bookstore, administrative offices, a computer lab with windows, and a multi-purpose space that can be used for gatherings. An indoor/outdoor space has tables and chairs for students to break between classes, eat, or study. The facility also has a child day-care center, available to staff, faculty, and students.

The center's instructional space reflects the mission to provide basic skills adult education, general education completion, and English language learning. Elementary English classes are taught in rooms with whiteboards that digitally record what the instructor has written. Classrooms designed for exams have desks with fold-down computer monitors for use depending on whether the exam is computerized or on paper. These computer monitors can be stored in the desk space so the rooms can be used as computer labs and conventional lecture space.

Projected Growth 2010–2030

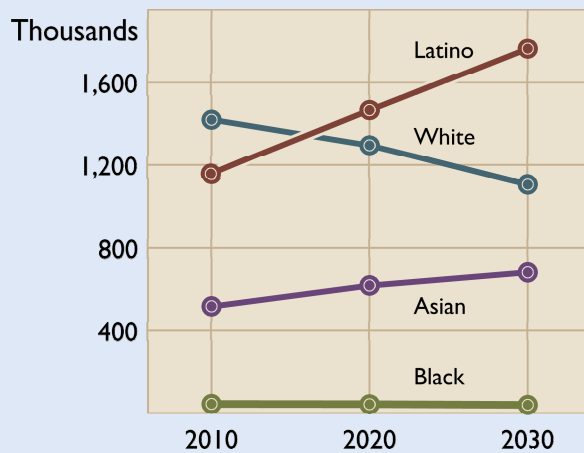


Percent increase in population 2010–2030

California	26%
Orange County	15%

Population projections from the California Department of Finance

Ethnic Breakdown of Orange County Population

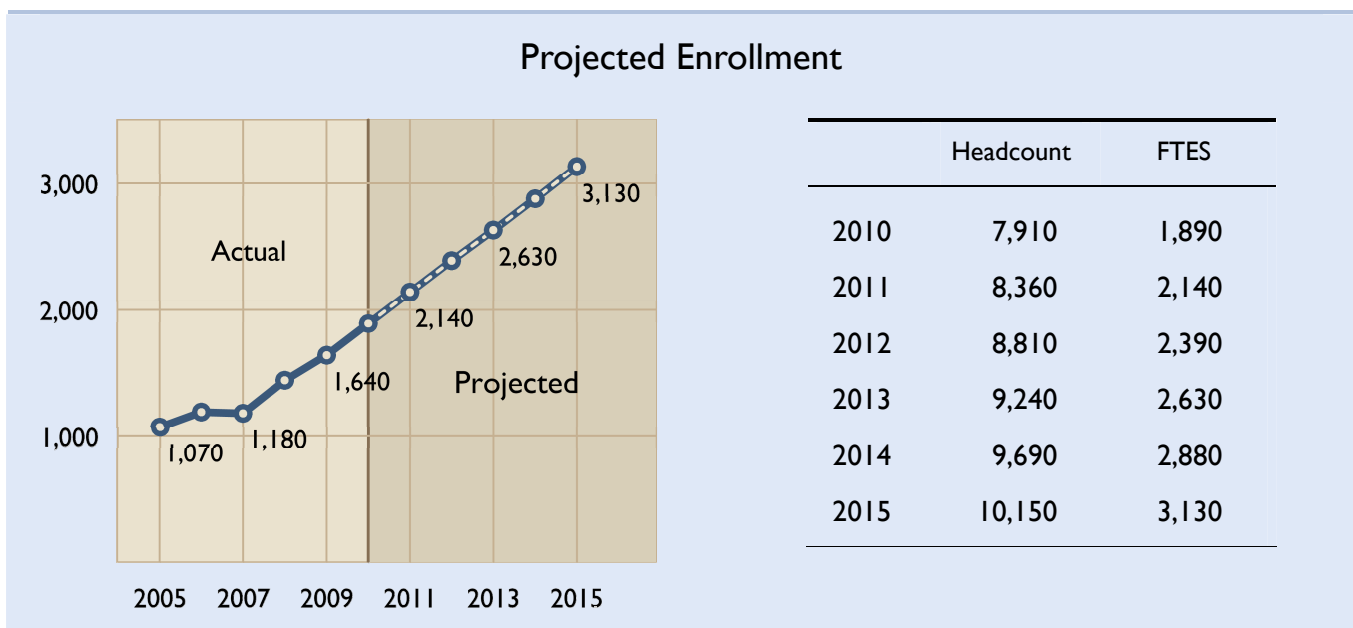


	2010	2030
Latino	1,158,300	1,765,100
White	1,419,900	1,107,000
Asian	517,800	679,700
Multiracial	62,300	80,700
Black	44,900	40,400
Pacific Islander	11,900	17,000
American Indian	12,900	15,400

Orange County is the state's second largest county, with a population of 3.1 million. According to Department of Finance figures, the population of Orange County has increased by 11% since 2000, slightly less than the state as a whole. The White population has decreased by 3%. The Latino and Asian populations have each grown by 27% and the Pacific Islander population has grown by 34%. Overall, Orange County is expected to grow by 24% by 2050.

Enrollment Projections

The Rancho Santiago Community College District is one of the largest districts in the state, with annual FTES of about 35,000. The non-credit courses offered by Santiago Canyon College have a total FTES of 3,000, more than half of which are served at the center. The center enrolls about 1,600 FTES per year, more than three times the minimum needed to qualify for state-approved status. The center has experienced a steady increase in headcount and FTES since opening in 2005. When the center opened, its annual FTES count was just over 1,000. The district's enrollment growth forecasts are on par with Department of Finance estimates. The district estimates that by 2015, the center will serve 3,130 annual FTES.



Alternatives

Districts must consider cost-saving alternatives to building a new educational center, and to administering a center once it is in operation. This might include expanding course offerings at existing facilities, sharing facilities with other educational entities, or scheduling courses to increase enrollment. Districts may offer asynchronous learning arrangements in order to reduce the expense of using facility space.

When Santiago Canyon College looked for a new site for the center, they considered offering all non-credit continuing education programs at the main campus. This option was ruled out due to the growth and capacity needs of the main campus to expand for-credit course offerings. Also, the new location would need to be more accessible by public transportation. The college decided on the facility location based on its proximity to downtown, access to public transportation, cost, and environmental factors.

Some alternatives are immediately ruled out based on the population a center is intended to serve. Online or cable television courses are not viable options for students who require guided, hands-on instruction, or for students who may not have a computer, Internet or television access or other means of accessing course materials.

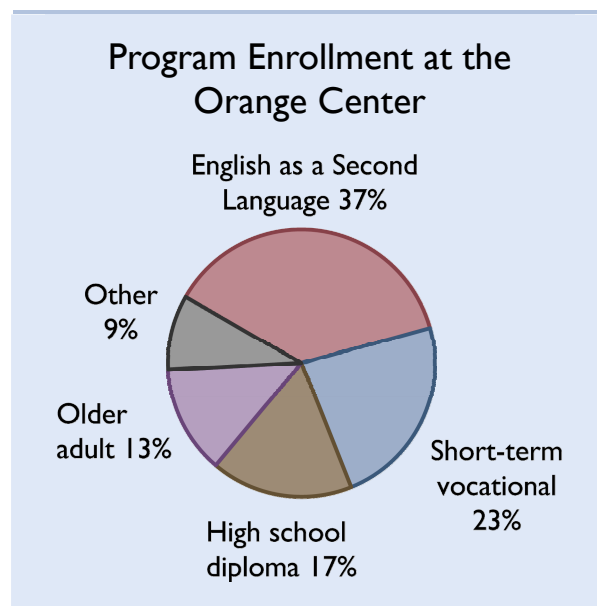
The college is working to maximize service to students with conveniently scheduled courses. Many students in continuing education programs require night courses they can take after work or when they can schedule childcare. The center's busiest time and highest capacity is at night. Saturday classes are offered in the morning and early afternoon.

Academic Planning and Program Justification

The center is a 100% non-credit facility dedicated to serving the basic skills and adult education needs of the region. The center's academic mission is to assist students in achieving the following:

- Completing high school education
- Preparing for and obtaining a GED
- English as a Second Language instruction
- Obtaining citizenship
- Improving parental skills
- Acquiring career and technical training

The current spring semester offers 138 free, open entry/open exit courses with a total of 210 class sections. Course schedules and other informational materials are published in English and Spanish. Maps, registration, and counseling information are also provided. The center offers free short-term vocational certificates for customer service representative, general office clerk, Web associate, medical billing, and others.



In the 2008–09 academic year, 122 students graduated from high school, 220 students earned a GED, and 139 completed a certificate or program. There were 5,539 overall course completions.

Student Services and Outreach

The Orange Education Center's program offerings are inherently student service and outreach oriented. Most programs focus on basic skills and helping foreign-born students assimilate to living in Orange County. Services include a testing center, high school and community outreach programs, programs for disabled students, a career resource center, and job placement. Services are aimed at guiding students from the most elementary levels of English comprehension to training for technical careers. The outreach services department employs four full-time and two part-time employees.

The center has a counseling office with bilingual staff, where students can seek guidance on course scheduling, career goals, and personal matters. The counseling department is staffed with three full-time and eight part-time counselors. There is limited need for financial aid assistance and counseling because the courses are free, but financial aid counselors are available by appointment. A bookstore is stocked with course materials. The center does not have a health services office; for health services, students must go to the main campus.

Capital Outlay and Support Projections

The center was built using local bond money approved by voters in 2002. The \$337 million bond was to be split between Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College. Santiago Canyon College used \$30 million of its \$165 million share to establish the center. The funds were used to acquire the site, for demolition and rebuilding and remodeling, and to purchase all equipment and furnishings for offices and classrooms.

The center's total annual operational costs are approximately \$8.2 million. Salaries for full-time staff and faculty account for half of total operational costs. Part-time instruction and employee benefits each account for 15% of the operating budget. The remaining 20% is for supplies, materials, services, and capital outlay. The revenues are 79% General Fund, 9% categorical funds, and 12% federal funds.

The center does not have immediate expansion plans. It has enough capacity to accommodate currently projected growth. One potential capital outlay expense would be \$800,000 to build a 200-space parking lot on neighboring leased land.

Geographic and Physical Accessibility

The center is accessible from freeways and major streets. The Orange County Transportation Authority operates three bus routes that have stops within two blocks. A concern with future accessibility is parking. There are 334 parking spaces, with 306 for student use. Even with carpool arrangements, some students must park off-site during the busiest nighttime hours. While parking is not a major issue for student access, it does hinder the center from fully using its multi-purpose space. Parking limitations will also hinder the center from achieving maximum student capacity. Administrators are considering leasing neighboring property for a 200-space parking lot.

Effects on other Institutions

The district's proposal included 40 letters of support from nearby community colleges, universities, state and local government representatives, and business organizations. The local community colleges agree that continued growth of the center does not harm enrollment levels at their institutions.

Environmental and Social Impact

The environmental review of the site prior to demolition and renovation of the previous structure raised concerns about the use of lead paint. The new structure does not contain any of the original interior structure, so exposure to lead paint is no longer a concern.

The site was evaluated for local planning approval, aviation requirements, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The City of Orange determined that the site was exempt from the city's zoning requirements and that the district was free to proceed with use of the site. Environmental Impact Review and California Environmental Quality Act documents confirm that the site does not interfere with airport flight patterns. The site complies with ADA requirements for parking, meeting rooms, and restrooms.

Guidelines for the Contents of a Needs Study

General Description and Overview

A physical description of the site, and a social and demographic analysis of the surrounding area, must be provided. Data describing the socioeconomic profile of the area or region should be included, with income levels and racial-ethnic makeup provided.

Enrollment Projections

For a new community college or educational center, enrollment projections for the district proposing the center should exceed the planned enrollment capacity of existing district colleges and educational centers.

Alternatives

Districts must consider alternatives other than establishing an educational center. This includes consideration given to (1) expanding existing institutions within the region, (2) increasing classroom and laboratory utilization, (3) sharing facilities with other institutions, and (4) greater use of technology and distributed learning arrangements.

Academic Planning and Program Justification

The district must include a preliminary description of the proposed academic and certificate programs to be offered, along with a description of the proposed academic organizational structure. The description must demonstrate conformity with the Commission's program review guidelines and with state goals such as access, quality, intersegmental cooperation, and diversification of students, faculty, administration, and staff.

Student Services and Outreach

The district is required to describe the student services available and planned at the educational center. A description of outreach services to historically underrepresented groups must be included.

Capital Outlay and Support Budget Projections

Proposals must include five-year capital outlay projections and five-year projections of support costs, including costs for administration, academic programs, academic support, and other standard expense elements.

Geographic and Physical Accessibility

The physical and geographic accessibility of the location and surrounding service areas must be included. There must be a plan for students, faculty, and staff transportation to the proposed location. For locations that do not plan to maintain student on-campus residences, reasonable commute time for students must be demonstrated.

Effect on Other Institutions

The proposal must show evidence that other institutions were consulted during the planning process. Establishing a new community college center must not reduce existing or projected enrollments in nearby campuses of adjacent districts to a level that would damage their economy of operation.

Environment and Social Impact

A copy of the final environmental impact report must be included. To expedite the review process, the Commission should be provided with all information related to the environmental report process as it becomes available to responsible agencies and the public.

Economic Efficiency

The Commission encourages economic efficiency and gives priority to proposals for new institutions where the state is relieved of part of the financial burden. Assuming that all other criteria are satisfied, higher priority will be granted to proposals that include gifts of land, construction costs, or equipment, as opposed to proposed projects that anticipate all costs to be borne by the state.

Economic Efficiency

District funds paid for all capital outlay costs of planning, acquisition and building modernization. Ongoing annual operating and support costs are included in the funding allocation model and annual operating budgets for Rancho Santiago District and Santiago Canyon College. Some cost reductions that the center has taken are:

- Achieving greater energy efficiency by using skylights, room occupancy sensors, and outdoor parking and landscape light sensors. Timers shut off lights when the center is closed.
- Conserving water with low-flow plumbing and drought-resistant landscaping.
- Installing six air conditioning and heating units so that temperature control only occurs in occupied rooms.
- Scheduling classes to allow maximum use during the busiest times, thus maximizing FTES.
- Training staff in multiple areas in order to cover the duties of other departments should the need arise.
- Integrating three information systems down to one system.